

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR UR EG US
SUBJ: TALK WITH SOVIET AMBASSADOR POLYAKOV

1. AT HUNGARIAN NATIONAL DAY RECEPTION TODAY, I MET SOVAMB POLYAKOV. IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I HAD SEEN HIM SINCE THE ABROGATION OF THE EGYPTIAN-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP TREATY. HE WAS OBVIOUSLY INTERESTED IN RAISING SOME SUBJECTS, AND I HAD A FEW POINTS I WANTED TO MAKE TO HIM. SUMMARY OF TALK IS GIVEN BELOW.

2. TREATY ABORGATION: I TOLD POLYAKOV THAT I HAD HEARD VARIOUS REPORTS FROM SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN DIPLOMATS THAT USG ENGINEERED TREATY ABROGATION. MOST RECENT SUCH INSTANCE WAS SOVIET MILATT CALL ON ARMATT (CAIRO 4476). WHILE SOVIETS WERE FREE TO THINK WHAT THEY WISHED, I WANTED TO MAKE CLEAR THAT A) WE HAD NOT ENGINEERED TREATY ABROGATION AS SOME SOVIETS AND EAST EUROPEANS SEEM TO BELIEVE, AND B) WE HAD NOT SOUGHT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SITUATION. AS I HAD TOLD HIM IN THE PAST, WE ARE PURSUING OUR POLICIES BASED ON US INTERESTS IN EGYPT AND THE MIDDLE EAST AND WE ASSUME SOVIETS ARE DOING LIKEWISE. POLYAKOV DID NOT RESPOND DIRECTLY TO THE POINT. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE SECRETARY HAD PUBLICLY STATED THAT WE HAD KNOWN ABOUT THE TREATY ABROGATION SEVERAL DAYS IN ADVANCE AND ASKED WHAT THIS MEANT. I SAID I COULD

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ONLY ASSUME THAT THE SECRETARY HAD IN MIND THAT ALL OF

US, AND I KNEW FROM OUR TALKS WITH SOVIET EMBOFFS AND EAST EUROPEAN DIPLOMATS THAT THE SOVIETS WERE ALSO AWARE OF THIS, HAD HEARD THAT THERE HAD LONG BEEN TALK OF POSSIBLE EGYPTIAN ABROGATION OF THE TREATY. MAIN POINT I WISHED TO EMPHASIZE TO HIM WAS THAT WE HAD NOT ENGINEERED THE ACTION. IT WAS A DECISION ON THE PART OF PRESIDENT SADAT BASED ENTIRELY UPON HIS REACTION TO RECENT DEVELOPMENTS BETWEEN EGYPT AND THE USSR.

3. GENEVA: POLYAKOV EMPHASIZED USSR CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT GENEVA SHOULD BE RECONVENED . HE THOUGHT SOVIETS AND GOE WERE IN AGREEMENT ON THIS SUBJECT. I SAID WE, TOO, HAVE NO OBJECTION TO RECONVENING GENEVA, BUT ARE CONSCIOUS OF PROCEDURAL PROBLEMS INVOLVED THEREIN. ISRAELIS WILL NOT MEET WITH PLO, WHILE ARABS AND SOVIETS INSIST PLO MUST PARTICIPATE. THERE CAN BE NO MEANINGFUL CONFERENCE UNTIL AND UNLESS PARTIES AGREE ON PARTICIPANTS. POLYAKOV CRITICIZED ISRAELI STANCE, NOTING RABAT SUMMIT DESIGNATED PLO TO REPRESENT PALESTINIANS. IF ISRAELIS BELIEVE WEST BANK PALESTINIANS WILL SUFFICE, THEY ARE WRONG. I SAID I WAS NOT ARGUING THE SUBJECT, BUT NOTED PLO REMAINS TOTALLY UNWILLING TO GIVE ANY PUBLIC STATEMENT ACKNOWLEDGING ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, HOW COULD ANYONE EXPECT ISRAELIS TO MEET AT GENEVA OR ELSEWHERE WITH AN ORGANIZATION THAT DENIES THEIR RIGHT TO INDEPENDENT EXISTENCE. POLYAKOV ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THIS IS A PROBLEM, BUT NOTED ARAFAT IS UNABLE TO MAKE ANY SUCH STATEMENT BECAUSE IT WOULD HARM HIS POSITION WITHIN THE PLO. I SAID THIS MIGHT BE SO, BUT IT DOES NOT CHANGE THE BASIC PROCEDURAL PROBLEM.

4. US NAVAL VISIT: NOTING THE RECENT VISIT OF THE DAHLGREN TO ALEXANDRIA, POLYAKOV SAID HE HAD BEEN STRUCK BY THE COINCIDENCE OF THAT VISIT AND THE EGYPTIAN TERMINATION OF SOVIET NAVAL FACILITIES IN ALEXANDRIA. WERE WE PLANNING TO TAKE THESE OVER? I SAID SEVERAL OF HIS EAST EUROPEAN COLLEAGUES HAD

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RAISED SUBJECT WITH ME IN PRECISELY THOSE TERMS I HAD TOLD THEM, AND I WANTED TO REPEAT TO HIM, THAT THE DAHLGREN VISIT HAD BEEN ARRANGED SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE THE TREATY ABORGATION ANNOUNCEMENT. IT HAD NO CONNECTION WITH THE LATTER AND, AS I WAS SURE SOVIET CONGEN IN ALEXANDRIA MUST HAVE MADE CLEAR TO HIM, NEITHER MY NAVATT NOR DAHLGREN'S OFFICERS HAD SHOWN ANY INTEREST IN ALEXANDRIA'S NAVAL FACILITIES.

IN THIS CONNECTION, HE SHOULD ALSO NOTE THAT APART FROM ROUTINE INQUIRY FROM SHIPYARD MASTER OVER A YEAR AGO, GOE HAD NEVER AT A RESPONSIBLE LEVEL DISCUSSED THE SUBJECT WITH US.

5. SOVIET STATEMENT: ALLUDING TO PRESS COMMENTS ABOUT THE SOVIET STATEMENT AND THE FACT THAT EGYPTIANS HAD RETURNED IT, I ASKED WHAT WERE THE FACTS OF THE SITUATION? POLYAKOV CLAIMED VP MUBARAK HAD TOLD HIM STATEMENT SHOULD BE DELIVERED TO MFA. HE HAD THEREFORE INSTRUCTED ONE OF HIS OFFICERS TO DELIVER IT TO SAID HAMZA, PROTOCOL CHIEF, WITH A COVERING NOTE. WITHOUT GOING INTO DETAILS, POLYAKOV ACKNOWLEDGED EGYPTIANS HAD ULTIMATELY RETURNED THE NOTE/STATEMENT TO SOVIET EMBASSY. (FOR EGYPTIAN VERSION, SEE CAIRO 4426.)

6. SOVIET REACTION: ASKED WHAT SOVIETS INTEND TO DO NEXT, POLYAKOV SAID THERE IS NO INTENTION OF WITHDRAWING THEIR TECHNICAL ADVISORS NOW IN EGYPT, AT LEAST NOT UNTIL THEIR CONTRACTS EXPIRE. SOVIETS ARE ALSO PREPARED SIGN TRADE PROTOCOL. HE CLAIMED REASON FOR DELAY IN SIGNING PROTOCOL WAS MINTRADE ZAKARIA TAWFIK'S UNCERTAINTY IN MID-MARCH, WHEN HE WAS SCHEDULED TO GO TO MOSCOW, AS TO WHETHER HE WOULD CONTINUE IN OFFICE IN VIEW OF UPCOMING CABINET RESHUFFLE. (THIS COULD BE TRUE SINCE ZAKARIA TAWFIK ASKED EMBOFF JUST A FEW DAYS BEFORE CABINET RESHUFFLE WHETHER WE KNEW IF HE WOULD REMAIN IN CABINET.) NO NEW DATE HAS YET BEEN SET FOR SIGNING, BUT HE THOUGHT PERHAPS THIS WOULD TAKE PLACE IN APRIL OR PERHAPS MAY. SO FAR AS FUTURE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE OR ECONOMIC ARRANGEMENTS WITH EGYPT ARE CONCERNED, USSR WILL WANT TO WAIT AND SEE AND MAKE ITS JUDGEMENT
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IN THE LIGHT OF THEN PREVAILING CIRCUMSTANCES. FOR THE MOMENT, HOWEVER, "EVERYTHING IS ALL RIGHT" (WHATEVER THAT MEANS).

7. COMMENT. POLYAKOV WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO SUGGEST THAT SOVIETS, DESPITE THEIR DISPLEASURE ABOUT TREATY ABROGATION AND THEIR TOUGH STATEMENT, PLAN, FOR THE MOMENT AT LEAST, TO PURSUE A WAIT AND SEE POLICY. HE DID COMMENT THAT HIS LEAVE, WHICH HE HAD EARLIER HOPED TO BEGIN IN LATE MARCH, HAS BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL LATE AUGUST.
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